

Inspection of a good school: Stapleford Primary School

Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 3NB

Inspection date: 31 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this small and welcoming school. Pupils are an important part of the school and local community. They enjoy opportunities to extend their experience and learn beyond the classroom. For example, all pupils take part in a countryside learning day during their time at school.

Pupils generally behave well in lessons and when outside on the playground. Older and younger pupils enjoy playing together. Bullying is rare. Should it happen, pupils are confident that staff will help them to resolve it. Pupils are safe at school. They show kindness towards each other. They are respectful of the differences that other people have.

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils work hard to reach these expectations. Pupils enjoy the lessons they have and the topics they study in school. However, pupils do not learn as well as they should in the range of subjects they study. They have some gaps in their knowledge. This is because teaching does not precisely focus on the most important knowledge pupils need to learn. Children in the early years settle quickly into the life of the school. They quickly develop independence and are well prepared for Year 1.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders' curriculum plans include some detail on what pupils need to know and remember in each subject. Leaders have begun to refine the curriculum so that it identifies precisely the important knowledge and content that pupils need to learn. This is not in place across all subjects. In some subjects, leaders' planning does not clearly identify the important knowledge that pupils should learn or the order in which teachers must teach it. As a result, in a range of subjects, teachers do not build on what pupils already know and can

do. Pupils do not routinely make links between things they have already learned and new concepts.

In some subjects, teachers and leaders do not check carefully that pupils can remember and use important knowledge. This is because the curriculum does not specifically identify what it is that pupils must know and remember. Teachers do not consistently identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and misconceptions. As a result, the work pupils are set is too hard or too easy and does not build effectively on what pupils already know. This results in gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to teaching phonics. Staff have received training in teaching this new scheme. Leaders have used their checks on phonics teaching to identify further training for staff. Staff generally teach reading well. They know how to teach pupils to read new and unfamiliar words. Over time, pupils become fluent readers. Children in Reception begin to learn phonics as soon as they start school. They build their phonics knowledge and use this in their writing. However, the reading activities for children in the Nursery are less effective. This is because staff are less clear about what children should know and be able to do in reading at this age. Staff quickly identify pupils who find reading hard. They support these pupils to develop their confidence and fluency. As pupils get older they read a wide range of books and stories. Leaders have carefully chosen high-quality texts for pupils to read in lessons. Pupils enjoy reading these books. They also enjoy having books and stories read to them by adults.

There is clear guidance for staff on how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This guidance provides staff with the information they need. This helps pupils in lessons and during extra intervention sessions. The use of well-chosen resources further supports pupils with SEND with their learning.

Pupils appreciate the range of activities they can join in with. Residential trips and the school choir are particularly popular among pupils. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy through the curriculum. The vision and ethos of the school supports pupils to develop empathy and understanding of others.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, ensure that staff feel well supported at school. They are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff feel proud to work at the school.

Leaders have established systems for monitoring how well the processes they have introduced are working, for example when checking the effectiveness of the curriculum and how behaviour records link with safeguarding. However, their checks lack precision and rigour. Leaders do not know enough about what is working well and what needs to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders complete all required checks on new adults working in the school. They train all staff to understand how to spot the signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Staff understand when a minor concern becomes a potential safeguarding issue. They record safeguarding concerns, and follow the school's agreed procedures for doing so. Leaders review and act on these concerns. When required, leaders seek the support of other professionals for vulnerable pupils. The curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe online. Pupils understand what the potential risks are when they are online and understand the importance of seeking help should they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While leaders have reliable processes in place to safeguard pupils, the checks they make on behaviour records and how they feed into safeguarding are not precise or rigorous enough for leaders to have a secure oversight of the effectiveness of the systems in place. Leaders must ensure that they are precise and rigorous in checking all information shared.
- Leaders have not precisely identified the most important knowledge pupils will learn, or the order they will learn it, across all subjects. This means pupils do not consistently build on what they have previously learned. As a result, pupils have some gaps in their knowledge. Leaders must carefully identify the most important knowledge pupils must learn and remember, and the order in which they will learn it, across all subjects.
- Teachers do not routinely check how well pupils have learned the planned curriculum in order to use this information to adapt their teaching and planning. This includes in subjects where the curriculum has been clearly planned. This means the gaps in pupils' knowledge, and the misconceptions they have, are not routinely addressed. Teachers and leaders must ensure that they rigorously check how well pupils learn the curriculum and then adapt it where needed.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117455
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10268462
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jan Liversage
Headteacher	James Shillito
Website	www.stapleford.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school care for pupils.
- The school's most recent inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act was in May 2017, and it will receive its next inspection within eight years of that date.
- The school currently makes use of one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised safeguarding policies, audits of safeguarding conducted by the local authority and Diocese of St Albans, the school's record of background checks of adults at the school, and a sample of child protection files. Inspectors also spoke with governors, the designated safeguarding lead and staff about safeguarding practices at the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, staff, governors and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, bullying records, attendance records, pupils' records, minutes of governing body meetings, local authority monitoring reports, school development plans and school policies.
- Twenty-two responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, were considered.
- Inspectors considered 38 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. They also spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- Eleven responses were made to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. Inspectors also spoke with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Michael Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Karen Stanton

Ofsted Inspector

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